

**Kitchen & Garden Specialists Professional Development Day  
12 November 2010, Kitchen Garden Learning Centre  
Session notes**

**Session title:**

**Garden workshop – Advanced composting**

(With Hannah Maloney from Cultivating Community: <http://cultivatingcommunity.org.au>)

**Session overview:**

Would you like to advance your composting skills and knowledge? Learn the different methods of composting with Hannah Maloney from Cultivating Community. This workshop is a great opportunity to get your hands dirty and have those challenging compost questions answered.

**Session notes:**

**Compost ingredients:**

- Water
- Air
- Nitrogen
- Carbon

**Hot compost:**

- This is the quickest way to get compost.
- You can produce really nice compost within 3–6 weeks.
- But, it is labour-intensive – it requires a lot of turning.
- The compost temperature should remain at 65°C.
- You must pay attention to green to brown ratio, i.e. the carbon to nitrogen ratio, which should be C:N = 2:1
- Turn weekly.

**Cold compost:**

- In this case, just let nature do its work.
- This is not labour-intensive.
- Compost can be built over time.
- It takes 6 months to 2 years to be ready to use.
- No turning is required.

**Layering your compost:**

Your compost should be layered in the following order:

- *Bottom*

- Ground
- Twigs
- Nitrogen
- Carbon
- Nitrogen
- Carbon
- Nitrogen
- Carbon-brown layer
- Nitrogen-green layer
- Carpet/cardboard
- *Top*

Note the following:

- Nitrogen-rich materials include green materials, e.g. grass, food scraps and manure.
- Carbon-rich materials include dried grass, straw, hay, paper products and cardboard.
- Sawdust and chook poo together maintain a great balance of nitrogen and carbon.
- Watch out for members of the elium family, including citrus and onions – these are strongly acidic, are slow to break down and *repel* worms.
- It's always good to cut up your ingredients before putting them into the compost; this helps your compost break down even more quickly.
- A carpet cover is helpful because it keeps the light out, allowing the worms and bugs to travel to the top of the compost and meaning that the whole compost will break down a lot faster.

### **ADAM Compost recipe:**

- **Aliveness:** anything that was once alive can be used in compost.
- **Diversity:** maintain a good mix of carbon to nitrogen.
- **Aeration:** aeration in your compost is critical and a lack of it will result in an anaerobic compost. An anaerobic compost is one that is smelly, which is a result of a lack of air and too much nitrogen and carbon.
- **Moisture:** moisture on compost is essential – it is essential that the compost is not too wet and not too dry. A great way to test moisture content is the 'squeeze test'.
  - Grab a handful of compost and squeeze it.
  - If a lot of water comes out it is too wet.
  - If one drop comes out it is perfect.
  - If no moisture comes out it is too dry.

Good compost will smell sweet and earthy and will look like 70% chocolate ... yum!